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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S FEBRUARY  
13-14 VISIT TO QATAR

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Michael A. Ratney,  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) Mr. Attorney General: Embassy Doha welcomes your February 13-14 visit to Qatar. Your Qatari counterpart, Ali bin Fetais Al-Marri, met three times with your predecessor, in both Doha and Washington, and is extremely pleased at the prospect of your visit so soon after assuming office. This visit will build upon the solid institutional relationship between the Qatari Public Prosecution and the U.S. Department of Justice established by your predecessor and presents a good opportunity to convey to the highest levels of the GOQ the value we attach to counterterrorism and law enforcement cooperation - and to urge that this cooperation be deepened.

¶2. (S) Qatar lags behind other Gulf countries in overall counterterrorism intelligence sharing with the U.S., though GOQ cooperation is improving when a strong nexus is made to a law enforcement investigation. It is vital that we maintain if not expand this relationship. We hope that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on bilateral law enforcement cooperation between DOJ and Qatar's Public Prosecution will be ready for signature during your visit. Although non-binding, the MOU matters because the GOQ needs it as cover for the judicial assistance it provides us.

¶3. (C) We also recommend that you encourage Al-Marri to use his influence to finalize and implement the draft Qatari law on Trafficking in Persons. While commending the government for its cooperation with the DOJ, you should make clear that much more must be done to protect the large vulnerable population of Qatar and that the USG will continue to support such efforts.

¶4. (C) You should expect a strong pitch to transfer to Qatar three detainees, two in Guantanamo and one in the Naval Brig in Charleston. Al-Marri is particularly frustrated that the USG has not provided him with more information on the charges and accusations against these persons, nor mapped out a clear path to their release or transfer.

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DETAINEES IN GUANTANAMO AND CHARLESTON  
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¶5. (S) Qatari national Jarallah Al-Marri is currently being held in Guantanamo Bay; his brother, Ali, is in the U.S. Naval Brig in Charleston. (The Al-Marri are a large tribe in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere in the Gulf, and the two prisoners are not closely related to the Attorney General.) The Qatari AG has said he is prepared to take any action permitted under Qatari law that would clear the way for their to transfer to Qatar. While he understands that the ultimate decision on these cases rests with the U.S. Department of

Defense, he very much wants to secure the transfer of these three individuals, believes the relationship he has developed with DOJ should help in that regard, and is certain to ask for your assistance.

¶6. (S) Ali Al-Marri, the Charleston detainee, may soon be indicted in the U.S. on material support charges and the U.S. has formally transmitted a judicial assistance request to the GOQ seeking banking records and other evidence that could support his prosecution in the U.S. Although you may not be able to deliver good news about him or the other two detainees, you should note the importance the U.S. places on Qatar's cooperation with the U.S. prosecution of Ali Al-Marri, whose bank records we have requested on the grounds of judicial assistance.

¶7. (S) A third individual, Sudanese citizen Sami Al-Hajj, is of interest to the Qataris because he was a cameraman for the Doha-based Al-Jazeera television network at the time he was taken into custody. His family continues to reside in Qatar and pressures the Amir to help facilitate his release. The Sudanese Government informed the GOQ that it has no objection to Al-Hajj's transfer to Qatar, though we have told the GOQ that, even if Al-Hajj were approved for transfer, the USG would be reluctant to send him to a third country. Meanwhile, Al-Hajj has become a cause celebre for Al Jazeera, which broadcasts frequent stories on his incarceration and appeals for his release.

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TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS  
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¶8. (C) The dark underbelly of Qatar's spectacular

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energy-driven growth is the abysmal working conditions of the hundreds of thousands of Asian and South Asian workers brought here to build the country's roads and modern high-rises and provide the services and manual labor that Qataris never will. Along with most of its Gulf neighbors, Qatar was downgraded last year to Tier 3 in the annual State Department TIP report, and as such was liable for U.S. sanctions (which were waived by Presidential Determination). While there appears to be growing sensitivity to the issue at senior levels, many influential Qataris led by the prosperous but competition-free business community strenuously resist anything that smacks of liberalizing labor and immigration laws, fearing an erosion of their privileged position in a country where Qataris constitute at best 15 percent of the population.

¶9. (C) There has been little progress by the GOQ on TIP since the release of the State Department's annual TIP Report last June. Neighboring countries (Kuwait, Bahrain, and the UAE) have issued anti-TIP legislation; Qatar has not. The GOQ has long promised a comprehensive anti-TIP law and major changes to the Sponsorship Law (which itself often creates harshly inequitable conditions for more than 90 percent of Qatar's foreign workforce) but new legislation has not been issued. While there have been isolated cases of forced prostitution (not prosecuted), most TIP victims in Qatar are male and female domestic workers (who are not covered under the Labor Law) and male unskilled and semi-skilled laborers. The government has agreed to finance and host a DOJ program (\$225,000) to better equip law enforcement personnel and labor inspectors to identify TIP crimes and protect victims, but the program has not yet begun.

¶10. (C) Your visit presents an opportunity to urge the GOQ at the highest levels to pass and enact legislation to criminalize and prosecute TIP crimes and protect TIP victims. You should also deliver a message that Qatar, because of its extraordinary wealth is unusually positioned to set an example in the region for just and humane treatment for the foreigners who are building their country. In the meantime,

existing criminal statutes, rather than civil provisions of the Labor Law, can be used to prosecute crimes of forced labor and prostitution.

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A VITAL MILITARY RELATIONSHIP...  
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¶11. (S) The U.S. has a lot at stake in Qatar. Al-Udeid Air Base and other U.S. military facilities are critical to CENTCOM operations from Iraq to Afghanistan to the Horn of Africa. Qatar hosts approximately 9,000 U.S. forces, some 100 U.S. and Coalition aircraft, as well as the CENTCOM Forward Headquarters, the Combined Air Operations Center, SOCCENT Forward Headquarters, and other important DOD facilities. Qatar is funding hundreds of millions of dollars in construction for the U.S. at Al-Udeid Air Base. Our hosts regularly send military personnel to the U.S. for training, and after years of sourcing their military hardware in Europe, are showing increasing interest in buying American, with a major sale of C-17 aircraft first on the list.

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... AND A STRATEGIC PARTNER IN ENERGY  
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¶12. (C) Qatar is exceptionally friendly to U.S. energy companies and appreciates the competence and expertise they bring to the country's economic development. Since 1999, there has been USD 60 billion in foreign investment in Qatar's energy sector with the majority, about USD 40 billion, coming from U.S. firms, including ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips, Anadarko, and Occidental. Soon, nearly 20 percent of ExxonMobil's global Revenue will derive from Qatar. Qatar is also of growing importance to the U.S. from an energy security perspective as this small emirate will next year become a major supplier of LNG to the U.S. following the recent CFIUS approval of \$2.2 billion development by Qatar Petroleum, ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips of the Golden Pass LNG terminal in southeast Texas. Qatar is now the world's largest LNG exporter and will soon be the U.S.' largest source of imported LNG.

¶13. (U) At over USD 60,000, Qatar's per capita income is already ranked in the top five in the world, alongside Luxembourg and Liechtenstein. Between now and 2012, Qatar's LNG exports will more than double, bringing a corresponding growth to Qatar's economy and global financial clout.

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COMMITMENT TO EDUCATIONAL REFORM, RULE OF LAW  
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¶14. (C) Beyond strong military and energy relationships, there is a lot going right in Qatar from the U.S. perspective. Qatar's commitment to modernize its educational system is exemplified by Education City, a 2500-acre campus on the outskirts of Doha. Managed by the Qatar Foundation, the umbrella organization chaired by the Amir's wife, Sheikha Mozah, Education City is home to five U.S. college branch campuses (Texas A&M, Carnegie Mellon, Weill-Cornell Medical School, Georgetown School of Foreign Service, and Virginia Commonwealth University), with some 800 students currently enrolled. Northwestern University in late 2007 announced its intention to establish a school of journalism. Meanwhile, primary and secondary school curriculum is being reformed along U.S. standards and a network of competitive charter schools is gradually replacing out-moded government-run schools. And rule of law, if not full democratization, is taking root firmly, though slowly.

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TROUBLESOME POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP  
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¶15. (S) Although our relationship with Qatar remains solid in the energy, military and educational fields, politically it has soured steadily since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). This trend began with Al Jazeera's harshly biased coverage of OIF in 2003, but it has been Qatar's foreign policy initiatives - and its maddening behavior on the UN Security Council for the past two years - that really drove the deterioration. In addition, bilateral CT and intelligence cooperation - of obviously critical importance in this region - is now the worst of all GCC states. Meanwhile, the senior Qatari leadership appears to have grown jealous of our relationships with regional rivals and annoyed that we don't give Qatar more attention, including senior-level visits and visibility in our own regional initiatives.

¶16. (S) Our own list of grievances with Qatar is long enough, but at the core are its high-level engagement with Hamas leaders even as we seek to isolate them; support for Syria and its allies in Lebanon as we work to support the democratic majority; serving as a flak for Sudan and Hezbollah during its just-ended stint on the UN Security Council; and a failure to follow through on its stated commitment to forgive Iraqi debt.

¶17. (C) The Amir shares our view that restoration of order and a successful democratic transition in Iraq are of paramount importance not only to Iraq but to the region. While the Qataris has expressed concerns about civil war in Iraq, their officials also state publicly that the Coalition needs to stay in the country to establish wider security. However, a strong distaste for Iraq's Shia-dominated government drives Qatar's resistance to follow through on some of our priorities, including comprehensive debt forgiveness.

¶18. (C) Al Jazeera is by far the region's most prominent media outlet and the bane of many governments in the region, though no longer the irksome centerpiece of U.S.-Qatari relations. The network is more than ten years old with an Arabic-speaking audience of some 50 million viewers. In November 2006, it launched an English-language channel with a potential audience of 70 million and ambitions to compete with the major U.S. and British satellite networks worldwide. Since early 2006, the USG has seen a bumpy downward trend in inflammatory anti-Western bias and inaccuracy in Al Jazeera's content, though biased and inaccurate reporting continues to appear.

¶19. (S) Qatar is often accused (by Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, and others) of funneling money to Hamas, though we have never seen clear evidence that this is happening. The Qataris have been largely cooperative on counter-terrorist finance issues, apparently anxious to avoid letting their small but growing financial sector be exploited by terrorists. The Qatar Authority for Charitable Works monitors all domestic and international charitable activities and approves international fund transfers by the charities. Qatar has a Financial Information Unit that resides in the Qatar Central Bank and can review suspect accounts. Local banks work with the Central Bank and the FIU on CT finance

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and anti-money laundering issues, and bank officials attend U.S.-sponsored conferences on these subjects.

¶20. (S) Iran hangs heavily over our relationship with Qatar, which believes we may have plans for Iran, perhaps even military plans, that we are not sharing with them. During its 2006-07 tenure on the UN Security Council, Qatar cast the consensus-breaking (14-1) vote on Resolution 1696 in July 2006. (Qatar later joined consensus in two unanimous votes, UNSCR 1736 and UNSCR 1747, to impose sanctions on Iran's nuclear program.) Qatar does share our concern about Iran's nuclear program and revolutionary ideology, but Qatar's

geographic proximity, vulnerability of its energy installations, and the fact that its massive off-shore gas reserves are shared with Iran, dictate a less confrontational approach.

¶21. (C) We believe the Qatari leadership regards our relationship as strategic and permanent, and they see the military bases, energy contracts, and U.S. universities as evidence of this. But at this point, the Qatari leadership have written off the political relationship and are likely waiting out the Administration hoping that bilateral relations improve in 2009. In the meantime, Qatar has always responded well to high-level contact; likewise, isolating Qatar has only had a negative effect on its behavior. Visits like yours help enormously to sustain the positive aspects of our bilateral relationship.

RATNEY